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EXAMINER

ROBINSON BOYCE, AKIBA K

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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3623

DATE MAILED: 01/11/2005

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/223,901

Applicant(s)

WALKER, ET AL

Examiner

Akiba K Robinson-Boyce

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 27 August 2004.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-66 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-66 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Status of Claims

1. In response to the communication received 8/27/04, the following is a final office action. Claims 1, 50, 54, 59 and 60 have been amended. Claims 1-66 are pending in this application and have been examined on the merits. The previous rejection has been maintained.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 101

2. 35 U.S.C. 101 reads as follows:

Whoever invents or discovers any new and useful process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof, may obtain a patent therefor, subject to the conditions and requirements of this title.

3. Claims 1-59 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the claimed invention is directed to a non-statutory subject matter.

The basis of this rejection is set forth in a two-prong test of :

(1) whether the invention is within the technological arts; and

(2) whether the invention produces a useful, concrete, and tangible result.

4. For a claimed invention to be statutory, the claimed invention must be within the technological arts. Mere ideas in the abstract (i.e., abstract idea, law of nature, natural phenomena) that do not apply, involve, use, or advance the technological arts fail to promote the "progress of science and the useful art" (i.e., the physical sciences as opposed to social sciences, for example) and therefore are found to be non-statutory

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subject matter. For a process claim, the recited process must somehow apply, involve, use, or advance the technological arts.

In the present case, claim 1 is directed to a method for providing a reward to a bidder participating in an auction. Claim 1 recites the steps of "identifying a product subject to bidding during an auction session", "receiving a bid for the product from a bidder during the auction session", "determining, based on a reward rule, whether the bidder is qualified to receive a reward other than the product", and "transmitting across a computer network, to the bidder, an indication that the bidder is qualified to receive the reward". These steps represent mere ideas in the abstract since they do not comprise computer means or computer instructions embodied on a tangible medium to carry out the steps of the claim. Since no computer means or instructions embodied on a tangible medium do not apply to each limitation of the claim, claim 1 and all claims that depend from it (claims 2-49) are not in the technological arts, and are therefore found to be non-statutory.

In the present case, claim 50 is directed to a method for providing a penalty to a bidder participating in an auction. Claim 50 recites the steps of "identifying a product subject to bidding during an auction session", "receiving, across a computer network, a bid for the product from a bidder during the auction session", "determining, before the auction closes, based on a penalty rule, whether the bidder is qualified to receive the penalty", and "transmitting, to the bidder, an indication that the bidder is qualified to receive the penalty". These steps represent mere ideas in the abstract since they do not comprise computer means or instructions embodied on a tangible medium to carry

out the steps of the claim. Since no computer means or computer instructions embodied on a tangible medium do not apply to each limitation of the claim, claim 50 and all claims that depend from it (claims 51-53) are not in the technological arts and are therefore found to be non-statutory.

In the present case, claim 54 is directed to a method for providing a reward to a bidder participating in an auction. Claim 54 recites the steps of "receiving an identification of a product subject to bidding during an auction session", "transmitting across a computer network, a bid for the product to an auctioneer during the auction session", "receiving a reward other than the product in response to the bid". These steps represent mere ideas in the abstract since they do not comprise computer means or instructions embodied on a tangible medium to carry out the steps of the claim. Since no computer means or computer instructions embodied on a tangible medium do not apply to each limitation of the claim, claim 54 and all claims that depend from it (claims 55-58) are not in the technological arts, and are therefore found to be non-statutory.

In the present case, claim 59 is directed to a method for providing a reward to a bidder participating in an auction. Claim 59 recites the steps of "receiving an identification of a product subject to bidding during an auction session", "transmitting a bid for the product to an auctioneer during the auction session", "receiving, across a computer network before the auction session closes, a penalty in response to the bid". These steps represent mere ideas in the abstract since they do not comprise computer means or instructions embodied on a tangible medium to carry out the steps of the

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claim. Since no computer means or computer instructions embodied on a tangible medium do not apply to each limitation of the claim, claim 59 is not in the technological arts, and is therefore found to be non-statutory.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

5. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

6. Claims 50, 59, 64, 65 and 66 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Walker et al (US 6,108,639).

As per claims 50, 59, 64, 65, 66, Walker et '639 discloses:

Identifying a product subject to bidding during an auction session/receiving an identification of a product subject to bidding during an auction session/means for identifying a product subject to bidding during an auction session, (Col. 15, lines 32-36, [obtaining a purchase order that contains a description of the item]);

Receiving, across a computer network, a bid for the product from a bidder during the auction session/transmitting, a bid for the product to an auctioneer during the auction session/means for receiving a bid for the product from a bidder during the auction session, (Col. 15, lines, (Col. 15, lines 37-38, [providing said purchase order]);

Determining before the auction closes, based on a penalty rule, whether the bidder is to receive a penalty; and if the bidder is to receive the penalty: transmitting, to the bidder, an indication that the bidder is to receive the penalty/receiving, before the auction session closes, a penalty in response to the bid/means for determining before the auction closes, based on a penalty rule, whether the bidder is to receive a penalty (Col. 16, lines 5-12, [identifying one or more rules], Col. 10, lines 10-15, [buyer charged a fee or penalty]).

a storage device, (Col. 7, line 9, [storage device]);

a processor connected to the storage device, (Col. 7, line 8, [processor]);

the storage device storing a program for controlling the processor/ A computer readable medium encoded with processing instructions, (Col. 7, lines 11-14, [storage device storing one or more instructions to enable the processor to retrieve, interpret and execute]).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

7. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

8. Claims 1-3, 5-8, 10-17, 20-22, 24-26, 28-31, 37-42, 47, 54-57, 60-63 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Walker, et al. (US Patent 6,018,639), and further in view of Franchi (US Patent 5,770,533).

As per claims 1, 2, 20, 21, 24-26, 31, 61-63, Walker, et al discloses:

identifying a product/receiving an identification of a product/means for identifying a product subject to bidding during an auction session, (Col. 15, lines 32-36, [obtaining a purchase order that contains a description of the item]);

receiving a bid/a second bid/a prior bid/transmitting, across a computer network/means for receiving a bid for the product from a bidder during the auction session, (Col. 15, lines 37-38, [providing said purchase offer]).

determining before the auction closes, based on a reward rule/based on the bid whether the bidder is qualified to receive a reward/means for determining before the auction closes whether the bidder is qualified to receive a reward/transmitting, to the bidder, an indication that the bidder is qualified to receive the reward/means for transmitting to the bidder, an indication that the bidder is qualified to receive the reward, (Col. 16, lines 5-16, [identifying one or more rules, and providing said secondary market item to said customer]).

a storage device, (Col. 7, line 9, [storage device]);

a processor connected to the storage device, (Col. 7, line 8, [processor]);

the storage device storing a program for controlling the processor/ A computer readable medium encoded with processing instructions (Col. 7, lines 11-14, [storage device storing one or more instructions to enable the processor to retrieve, interpret and execute]).

Walker, et al. does not specifically disclose that his process is repeated for a second bidder, however, this feature is obvious with his system because since the

system includes more than one entity trying to make a purchase, it is logical to repeat the method for the next bidder, which is the second bidder.

Walker, et al fails to teach receiving a reward other than the product, but does disclose receiving the product as the reward in the abstract, lines 8-11.

However Franchi discloses:

Receive a reward other than the product, (Col. 28, lines 46-48, [where the player playing the gambling game randomly wins a door prize upon the player utilizing the player console]). Franchi discloses this limitation in an analogous art for the purpose of showing that participants who place bets can receive an award as an incentive to continue participating.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention to receive a reward other than the product with the motivation of incenting bidders to continue bidding.

As per claims 3, 13,14, 22, Walker, et al. discloses:

determining whether the bid is greater than each of a plurality of remaining bids/prior bid/wherein the reward includes a condition that the bid from the bidder is greater than each bid received from the plurality of remaining bidders/determining which of the at least one bids is a greatest bid, (Col. 6, lines 55-59, offer price incrementally increased until a seller agrees to bind]).

As per claim 5, Walker, et al. discloses:

wherein the reward rule comprises a condition that the bidder accept an offer provided by a third party, (Col. 15, lines 59-62, [prioritizing an accepting based on predefined criteria]).

As per claim 6, Walker, et al. discloses:

Transmitting, before the determining step, an offer to the bidder for a second product provided by the third party; receiving an acceptance of the offer from the bidder; whereby the bidder is qualified to receive the reward, (Col. 15, line 65-Col. 16, line 11, [providing said secondary market item]).

As per claims 7, 40, 56, Walker, et al. discloses:

wherein the second product is a service, (Col. 1, lines 35-37, [services]).

As per claim 8, Walker, et al. discloses:

wherein the service is a credit card account and wherein the third party is a credit card provider, (Col. 9, line 62-Col. 10, line 15, [credit or debit card account]).

As per claim 10, Walker, et al. discloses:

determining whether the bidder has an acceptable credit history before the offer is transmitted to the bidder, (Col. 10, lines 16-26, [authorization]).

As per claims 11, 12, Walker, et al. discloses:

receiving at least one bid for the product from each of a plurality of remaining bidders/wherein the step of receiving at least one bid is performed prior to the step of receiving the bid, (Abstract, lines 5-8, [processing each received CPO to determine if seller will accept]).

As per claim 17, neither Walker, et al. or Franchi specifically disclose:

wherein the reward rule comprises a condition that the bid is the first received bid.

Official notice is taken that it is old and well known in the auctioning art for the bid to be the first received bid. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention for the bid to be the first received bid because it is traditional in auctions to receive bids in the order that they come in.

As per claim 37, Walker, et al. discloses:

receiving personal data from the bidder including at least one of a name, and address and a financial account identifier belonging to the bidder, (Col. 8, lines 12-21, [buyer name]).

As per claim 38, Walker, et al. discloses:

Verifying the personal data with a third party, (Col. 8, lines 22-25, [buyer identifier used to index the offer database]).

As per claims 39, 57, Walker, et al. discloses:

Receiving the bid from the bidder over one of a telecommunications network and the Internet, (Col. 6, lines 41-57, [PSTN]).

As per claim 41, Walker, et al. discloses:

providing the reward to the bidder, (Col. 16, lines 15-16, [providing]).

As per claim 42, Walker, et al. discloses:

receiving, from the bidder, a payment to close the auction session, (Col. 16, lines 17-22, [initiating the use of payment identifiers]).

As per claim 47, Walker, et al. fails to disclose wherein the reward rule includes a condition that the reward is issued randomly, but does disclose reward rules as shown in col. 16, lines 5-7.

However Franchi discloses:

wherein the reward rule includes a condition that the reward is issued randomly, (col. 28, lines 46-48, [door prize randomly awarded]). Franchi discloses this limitation in an analogous art for the purpose of showing that participants who place bets can receive an award as an incentive to continue participating.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention to issue a reward randomly with the motivation of incenting all bidders in the auction to continue bidding for a possibility of receiving the random prize.

As per claim 54, Walker, et al. discloses:

receiving an identification of a product subject to bidding during an auction session, (Col. 15, lines 32-36, [description of item and payment identifier]);

transmitting, across a computer network, a bid for the product to an auctioneer during the auction session, (Col. 15, lines 38-39, [providing purchase offer]);

Walker, et al fails to teach receiving a reward other than the product, but does disclose receiving the product as the reward in the abstract, lines 8-11.

However Franchi discloses:

Receive a reward other than the product, (Col. 28, lines 46-48, [where the player playing the gambling game randomly wins a door prize upon the player utilizing the player console]). Franchi discloses this limitation in an analogous art for the purpose of showing that participants who place bets can receive an award as an incentive to continue participating.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention to receive a reward other than the product with the motivation of incenting bidders to continue bidding.

As per claim 55, Walker, et al. discloses:

receiving the product in response to the bid, (Col. 16, lines 15-16, [providing the item means bidder is receiving the item]).

As per claim 60, Walker, et al. discloses:

A computer data signal embodied in a computer-readable carrier wave comprising a segment having computer processing instructions for notifying a bidder that the bidder is qualified to receive a reward...in response to a previous bid submitted

during an auction session, (Col. 6, lines 15-27, lines 41-54, Col. 7, lines 7-20, [general-purpose computers where the communication links are electronic signals]).

Walker, et al fails to teach receiving a reward other than the product, but does disclose receiving the product as the reward in the abstract, lines 8-11.

However Franchi discloses:

Receive a reward other than the product...(Col. 28, lines 46-48, [where the player playing the gambling game randomly wins a door prize upon the player utilizing the player console]). Franchi discloses this limitation in an analogous art for the purpose of showing that participants who place bets can receive an award as an incentive to continue participating.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention to receive a reward other than the product with the motivation of incenting bidders to continue bidding.

9. Claims 15, 16, 23, 28-30, 46 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Walker, et al. (US Patent 6,018,639), and further in view of Franchi (US Patent 5,770,533), and further in view of Fisher et al (US 6,243,691).

As per claims 15, 16, 23, 28-30, neither Walker, et al., '639 or Franchi specifically disclose wherein the reward rule comprises a condition that the bid from the bidder is greater than the greatest bid by a certain percentage/currency value/that the bid exceed a prior bid by a predetermined value, but Walker et al '639 does disclose providing a reward in Col. 16, lines 15-16.

However, Fisher et al discloses wherein the reward rule comprises a condition that the bid from the bidder is greater than the greatest bid by a certain

percentage/currency value/that the bid exceed a prior bid by a predetermined value, (Col. 9, lines 43-56, [highest remaining bid from a bidder is marked as successful and of the bid is below the minimum bid allowed, the bid is marked as unsuccessful])). Fisher et al discloses this limitation in an analogous art for the purpose of showing that in order for a bid to be successful, it must be greater than the minimum bid allowed, which in this case is the highest remaining bid

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention for the bid from the bidder to be greater than the greatest bid by a certain percentage or currency value because it is common to have some kind of reference value in order to determine what a high bid for an item is in a particular auction.

As per claim 46, neither Walker, et al. or Franchi specifically disclose terminating the reward if a higher bid is received from a second bidder, but Walker et al '639 does disclose terminating a reward and giving a penalty in col. 10, lines 10-13.

However Fisher discloses terminating the reward if a higher bid is received. Fisher discloses this limitation in an analogous art for the purpose of showing that a participant will not be rewarded if they do not meet certain qualifications.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention to terminate the reward if a higher bid is received because since the highest bid is the prizewinner, the lower bid would automatically become disqualified.

10. Claims 32 and 33 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Walker, et al. (US Patent 6,018,639), and further in view of Franchi (US Patent 5,770,533), and further in view of Scholldorf (EP 0 411 748 A2).

As per claims 32, 33, neither Walker, et al. or Franchi specifically disclose measuring a time between the bid and a previous bid from a second bidder; establishing a reward rule including a condition that the bidder is qualified to receive the reward when the time is greater than a predetermined value; determining whether the time between the bid and the previous bid is greater than the predetermined value, but Walker et al '639 does disclose a bidder submitting a bid in the abstract, lines 5-8.

However, Scholldorf discloses:

measuring a time between the bid and a previous bid from a second bidder; establishing a reward rule including a condition that the bidder is qualified to receive the reward when the time is greater than a predetermined value; determining whether the time between the bid and the previous bid is greater than the predetermined value, (Page 9, line 46-Page 10, line 11, [bids are entered into the system in a time order and are time stamped]. Scholldorf discloses this limitation in an analogous art for the purpose of showing that the time between a first bid on the right most and the last bid on the left most can easily be determined.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention to measure the time between a bid and a previous bid, and to determine if the bidder is qualified to receive the reward when the time is greater than a predetermined value because this would ensure that the auction/product purchase session does not go on past a certain time.

11. Claim 43 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Walker, et al. (US Patent 6,018,639), and further in view of Franchi (US Patent 5,770,533), and further in view of Baraldi "Efficient parallel algorithms for the minimum cost flow problem", Journal of Optimization Theory and Applications (Dec. 1997), vol. 95, no.3, p. 501-30.

As per claim 43, neither Walker, et al. or Franchi specifically disclose wherein the payment is determined from a parallel auction, but Walker et al does disclose an auction environment in the abstract, lines 1-11.

However, Baraldi discloses:

wherein the payment is determined from a parallel auction, (entire abstract, [shows minimum cost is determined through a parallel auction algorithm]). Baraldi discloses this limitation in an analogous art for the purpose of showing that parallel auctions are used to influence minimum cost.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention to determine the payment from a parallel auction because this payment price would be close to the average price. Parallel auctions are commonly used as backbones for auctions that presently take place.

12. Claims 44, 45 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Walker, et al. (US Patent 6,018,639), and further in view of Franchi (US Patent 5,770,533), and further in view of Waren Publishing "Budget Leaves Out Spectrum Fee", Television Digest, (13 Feb. 1995), Vol. 35, No. 7.

As per claim 44, neither Walker, et al. or Franchi specifically disclose receiving, from the bidder, a payment to extend the auction session, but Walker et al '639 does disclose a payment to an auction session in col. 18, lines 25-31.

However, Waren Publishing discloses:

receiving, from the bidder, a payment to extend the auction session, (1st paragraph, [users are charged spectrum fees in order for auction authority to be extended]. Waren Publishing discloses this limitation in an analogous art for the purpose of making it possible of the auction to continue for a longer period of time.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention to receive, from the bidder, a payment to extend the auction session because it is common in the auctions of the present for a bidder to pay for his/her time. This would increase the flow of funds/payments towards the company/business.

As per claim 45, neither Walker et al '639, Franchi, nor Waren Publishing disclose determining the payment from a parallel auction, however, Walker et al '639 does disclose an auction environment in the abstract, lines 1-11.

Official notice is taken that it is old and well known in the auction art to determine the payment from a parallel auction. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention to determine the payment from a parallel auction because this payment price would be close to the average price. Parallel auctions are commonly used as backbones for auctions that presently take place.

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13. Claims 4, 9, 18, 19, are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Walker, et al. (US Patent 6,018,639) and further in view of Franchi (US Patent 5,770,533) , and further in view of Walker, et al (US Patent 6,049,778).

As per claim 4, 9, 18, both Walker, et al. '639 and Franchi et al fail to teach a reward with a value of currency, but Walker '639 does teach issuing a reward in the abstract, lies 8-11.

However Walker, et al '778 discloses:

a value of currency, (Col. 10, lines 34-38). Walker et al '778 discloses this limitation in an analogous art for the purpose of showing that monetary rewards can be given in an auction environment as an incentive.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention to comprise the reward of a value of currency because this is a traditional way of rewarding a customer in the promotion art. This type of promotion will give the customer/bidder more incentive to continue to purchase/bid.

As per claim 19, both Walker, et al. '639 and Franchi et al fail to teach wherein the reward corresponds to a difference between the bid and a greatest bid, but Walker et al '639 does teach issuing a reward in the abstract, lies 8-11.

However Walker, et al '778 discloses:

wherein the reward corresponds to a difference between the bid and a greatest bid, (Col. 10, lines 38-41). Walker et al '778 discloses this limitation in an analogous art for the purpose of giving the winner the most reasonable reward for the bid that was submitted.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention to have the reward correspond to a difference between the bid and a greatest bid because this is the amount in which the highest bidder goes over the

normal bid price. Since the highest bidder is the one who is rewarded, it is logical to reward the bidder with the amount the he/she has put out to win.

14. Claims 27, 34, 35, 36, 48, 49, 58, are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Walker, et al. (US Patent 6,018,639), and further in view of Franchi (US 5,770,533), and further in view of Barzilai, et al (US Patent 6,012,045).

As per claim 27, 34, 35, 36, 48, both Walker, et al. '639 and Franchi fail to teach comparing a participation history of the bidder and the second bidder; and awarding the product based on the comparison/establishing a reward rule that a historic participation meets a predefined criterion; measuring the historic participation of the bidder; and determining whether the historic participation meets the predefined criterion/wherein the predefined criterion includes a requirement that the bidder has participated in a t least one previous auction session/wherein the historic participation corresponds to...a number of previous auctions in which the bidder participated/wherein the reward to be offered is determined based on...the bidders participation history, but Walker et al '639 does disclose a bidder participating in an auction-like environment in the abstract, lines 1-5.

However Barzilai, et al discloses:

comparing a participation history of the bidder and the second bidder; and awarding the product based on the comparison/establishing a reward rule that a historic participation meets a predefined criterion; measuring the historic participation of the bidder; and determining whether the historic participation meets the predefined criterion/wherein the predefined criterion includes a requirement that the bidder has participated in a t least one previous auction session/wherein the historic participation

corresponds to...a number of previous auctions in which the bidder participated/wherein the reward to be offered is determined based on...the bidders participation history, (Col. 12, line 67-Col. 13, line 24). Barzilai et al discloses this limitation in an analogous art for the purpose of determining how much profit one can receive in an auction environment due to the history of the bidder.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention to compare a participation history of the bidder and award the product based on the comparison because this would encourage the bidder to continue his/her participation. It would also have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to use the amount of profit earned from the bidder as historic participation because this information will reveal if the bidder is likely to come back to another session. This information is also bidder-specific and will be useful when pulling up bidder files.

As per claims 49, 58, both Walker, et al. '639 and Franchi fail to teach receiving/transmitting an encrypted indication, but Walker et al '639 does teach a participant submitting a bid as a collectible conditional purchase offer in the abstract, lines 1-11.

However Barzilai, et al discloses:

Receiving an encrypted indication of a time the bid was transmitted/transmitting the bid with an encrypted indication of a time the bid was transmitted, (Col. 8, lines 20-32). Barzilai et al discloses this limitation in an analogous art for the purpose of securely showing times that a user submits his or her bid.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention to receive or transmit an encrypted indication of a time the bid was transmitted because this information would help enforce a time limit during a bidding

session and would encourage bidders to submit bids early in order to receive certain types of rewards for early submissions.

15. Claims 51-53 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Walker, et al. (US Patent 6,018,639), and further in view of Pionchon (US Patent 5,200,890).

As per claims 51-53, Walker, et al. '639 fails to teach wherein the penalty rule comprises a condition that the bid is less than a current high bid/less than a predetermined value/wherein the penalty comprises making the bidder ineligible to continue, but Walker, et al does teach a participant submitting a bid as a collectible conditional purchase offer in the abstract, lines 1-11.

However, Pionchon discloses:
wherein the penalty rule comprises a condition that the bid is less than a current high bid/less than a predetermined value/wherein the penalty comprises making the bidder ineligible to continue (Col. 7, lines 15-24). Pionchon discloses this limitation in an analogous art for the purpose of showing that if the bidder does not meet certain standards, then that bidder can not continue being a participant.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention to apply the penalty rule and make the bidder ineligible to continue if the bid is less than a current high bid because the lower bid cannot qualify for an award. Since the opposite of an award is a penalty, the penalty rule would be applicable in this case.

Response to Arguments

16. Applicant's arguments filed 8/27/04 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

As per the 101 rejection given to claims 1-59, these claims still stand rejected under 35 USC § 101 as described above in paragraphs 2-4. The applicant is encouraged to also include the computer means or software embodied on a tangible medium in the preamble of the claim. The applicant has attempted to overcome the 35 U.S.C. 101 rejection by amending independent claims 1, 50, 54 and 59 to include "across a computer network" in a single limitation of each claim, however, it is still not clear as to how the other limitations of these claims are being processed. One can easily interpret that the other limitations in the independent claims are being processed manually by a human utilizing a pen and paper.

As per claims 50, and 64-66, the applicant argues that prior art does not teach "determining before the auction closes, based on a penalty rule, whether the bidder is to receive a penalty", and "receiving, before the auction session closes, a penalty in response to the bid". The applicant argues that col. 16, lines 5-12 of Walker '639 merely discloses rules in determining whether a seller will accept a customer's purchase offer, and that col. 10, lines 10-15 merely recites a condition that, after a bidder wins an auction, the bidder must pay for what was on or else the bidder is penalized. However, this penalty is implemented before the close of the auction since the transaction is still being processed during step 1008. Walker '639 shows that the penalty is applied once the CPO is accepted by a seller, not once the customer is bind to the purchase. As

shown in col. 18, lines 3-19 of Walker '639, once a customer accepts the CPO, the auction is still active until it is determined that the item satisfies a description and once this happens, then the customer is bind to purchase the item. In addition, it is true that col. 16, lines 5-12 of Walker '639 shows rules applied to determine if the seller will accept a customer's CPO, however, these rules are also applied as penalty rules since penalties are directly linked to the CPO and implemented upon acceptance of the CPO. Therefore, if rules are applied to determine if a CPO is accepted, the penalty that goes along with this particular CPO is also implemented through application of these rules.

As per claims 1-49, 51-58, and 60-63, the applicant argues that prior art does not teach that the bidder may receive a reward other than the product. The applicant also argues that Franchi has nothing to doe with auctions or even bidding. However, Franchi's invention deals with a casino system. In Claim 36 of Franchi, terms such as "player betting data" and "gambling game" proves that bidding is implemented in this invention. In addition, claim 41 of Franchi discloses a "door prize" . This "door prize" serves as a separate award in relation to the updated credit balance of the players betting card in response to player winnings as shown in Col. 21, lines 45-48. In Franchi, the ability to play the gambling game represents the product and updating the credit balance of the player's betting card so these players can play the gambling game represents the reward.

The applicant argues that there is no motivation to modify and combine Walker and Franchi. However, the combination of these references are valid since both references disclose the implementation of conditional offers in determining a reward.

Walker et al '639 specifically discloses a "conditional purchase offer" for receiving a processing individual conditional purchase offers from buyers for different products. Franchi discloses conditional offers through gambling via betting card by a player. As disclosed by Merriam Webster's Dictionary, a bet is defined as "a choice made by consideration of probabilities", where in this case, the consideration of probabilities are conditional.

Conclusion

1. **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL.** Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the mailing date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Akiba K Robinson-Boyce whose telephone number is

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703-305-1340. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Tuesday 8:30am-5pm, and Wednesday, 8:30 am-12:30 pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Tariq Hafiz can be reached on 703-305-9643. The fax phone numbers for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned are 703-746-7238 [After final communications, labeled "Box AF"], 703-746-7239 [Official Communications], and 703-746-7150 [Informal/Draft Communications, labeled "PROPOSED" or "DRAFT"].

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is 703-305-3900.

AMB

A. R. B.
January 5, 2005


TARIQ R. HAFIZ
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER
TECHNOLOGY CENTER 3600